

PREPARED TESTIMONY FOR THE APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE TO BE  
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Members of the Appropriation Committee: My name is Michael Donovan. My address is: 28 Quaker Ridge Rd, Bethel. I am here to speak on behalf of all the disabled citizens of our state, and more specifically, on behalf of my son Stephen and Ability Beyond Disability—the community organization that provides for his care. Stephen is a 35 year old Down's syndrome man who is thriving because of the wonderful care and services being provided to him. He lives in a lovely group home with five other consumers. He has a rich and active social life. He is safe, happy and secure. I am here before you this evening because I am very frightened for his future which I feel is being seriously threatened.

I am not only frightened; I am also very frustrated because I have been to Hartford to advocate for the disabled and the community providers that serve them on several occasions. Last year, I was one of many family members-part of the Parent Empowerment Task force—who delivered over 6000 petitions to Governor Rell's office asking to have a town hall meeting with her to voice our concerns about the budget crisis and the inadequate funding for the private community providers. We got no response. I requested an interview with Brian Koonz who writes commentary for the Danbury News-Times. My effort yielded an article on November 19, of last year entitled "Smart money is on Private Providers." Some of you may have seen that article. I've attended rallies petitioning legislators to fix a broken system of funding. I sent e-mails to Commissioner O'Meara begging him to look out for the private providers—the backbone of the state's delivery system of services for the disabled. He did respond to me with platitudes, but no real long term solution to the problem. I have sent e-mails to some members of the legislative branch and to Governor Rell—no response from anyone, except David Scribner who seemed sympathetic to the issue and frustrated that no easy solution was readily at hand. I might add that I also e-mailed all of you on the appropriation committee just the other day and as of this evening received no response.

So, here I am standing before you frightened, frustrated, and angry. Many years ago, the state could have expanded the private provider system; but instead, it has sustained a two track system that is cumbersome, inefficient, and costly. What troubles me is that our government is dysfunctional and out of touch with reality. The fact is that community providers have received level funding for the last three years and now the governor and DDS are imposing more cuts! This is nothing more than a short-term fix that will only result in long-term increased costs to the state. So now I ask you, before the situation gets terribly worse, provide the most vulnerable citizens of this state with some responsible government. If the administrative and legislative branches of our state government work cooperatively together to develop a more efficient and cost effective system of funding, you will not only reward our advocacy efforts, but you will insure my son's future and the future of the many community providers. Furthermore, you will go a long way to solving the current financial crisis for our state. Thank you.